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ABSTRACT

This staff development project was designed to increase teacher competency in the education of learning disabled adult students by helping the teacher to become aware of special education techniques and materials through inservice training. Emphasis was on reading with a variety of approaches demonstrated. Intensive workshop participation was planned and carried out to prepare adult basic education teachers with techniques for use with exceptional students and to familiarize them with materials for diagnosing and prescribing individual learning programs. (JD)

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LEARNING DISABILITIES AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Submitted By

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LEARNING DISABILITIES AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

SUMMARY

Upper Iowa University through a grant provided by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction, Adult Basic Education Division, has implemented a staff development project to train teachers working with Level I adult students. The major University staff member involved has an academic background in special education and is an experienced teacher of adults. Participants involved are teachers of adult education classes throughout the state of Iowa.

The need for a staff development project for teachers with students at Level I was revealed through requests by the teachers to the Area Coordinators for materials and techniques for working with students at this very basic level. Area Coordinators were unable to locate helpful information for their teachers and hence the need became apparent. Many new classes had been opened in the year or two previous to instigation of this project and teachers were confronted with many more Level I students than ever before. Some classes were in activity centers for handicapped adults and some were in county care facilities with adult students of all ages.

The staff development project undertaken provided methods, materials and teaching techniques in all areas of the curriculum. Emphasis was on reading with a variety of approaches demonstrated. Characteristics of the learning disabled student were examined and many students were identified as being learning disability cases. Remediation techniques were offered for these students. Many commercially available tests to help diagnose Level I skill needs were demonstrated. Prescriptive teaching, task analysis, and use of peer and volunteer teachers were

explored. Physical habilitation activities were included, as were many communication activities. Counseling and values clarification were important elements for the teachers.

The project was carried out in four phases. The first phase was devoted to research and materials accumulation. The next three phases were workshops spaced approximately two months apart. The first two workshops were each six hours in length, and the third was a five-day workshop.

The first two workshops were each held at four quadrant locations for the convenience of statewide participation. The third workshop brought all participants to the Upper Iowa University campus for one week of intensive interaction.

Information was disseminated through handouts, overhead projection, slides and cassette recordings, books, participant involvement, demonstration items and specific take-home products for each teacher.

COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION

Learning Disabilities and Adult Basic Education

A. Description and Development of the Program

This staff development project was designed to increase teacher competency through in-service training workshops. It was planned in response to an influx of Level I students in adult education classes. This influx was caused by an expansion of adult classes into sheltered workshops, activity centers for the handicapped, and state institutions. Adult Basic Education teachers were not prepared with techniques for use with exceptional students nor were they familiar with materials for diagnosing and prescribing individual learning programs.

Planning activities included an ERIC search and other library research for similar projects that might be replicated to meet stated needs. Conferences of various organizations were attended to glean the latest available information.

The project calendar was organized to hold two evening workshops at four locations in the state. A third workshop brought all participants together for one week of continued learning and sharing ideas and problems. Between the first two workshops the project director visited participating teachers at their respective schools to help implement project ideas.

B. Objectives and Goals

The Adult Education Act, Section 303, mandates that education be provided for adults whose inability to speak, read or write the English language constitutes a substantial

impairment of their ability. In Iowa the scope of Adult Basic Education has been extended to include building self-confidence and self-respect in the participants, and providing the opportunity for improving basic skills. These statements formed the base of the learning disability project objectives and goals. The major goal was to provide teachers trained to diagnose academic skills, and knowledgeable about individualized teaching techniques. Objectives included recognition of levels of learning, ability to conduct a task analysis, sequential teaching in specific content areas, knowledge of available testing instruments, and presentation of specific materials--both teacher-made and commercially available.

Although this project was developed and presented by Upper Iowa University staff, it reached a state-wide group of teachers. Now in its second year, the project is attracting even more teachers from across the state. According to John Hartwig, Iowa Department of Public Instruction, interest is being shown from teachers in other states who have heard about the project at conferences and regional meetings. It is possible that this project will be replicated in many states, since most Adult Basic Education teachers are faced with strikingly similar needs and up to the present time most emphasis in adult education has been placed at the intermediate or secondary level of learning.

C. Personnel Involved

Workshops for this project were developed and conducted by the Director of the project. Scheduling and recruiting participants was coordinated through eighteen Area Coordinators for Adult Basic Education from across the state. The

Iowa State Department of Public Instruction provided consultative services in the areas of special education and adult basic education. Upper Iowa University faculty members also provided consultative services in the areas of physical education, reading, bookkeeping, and administration. Support personnel (secretarial, clerical) were utilized to a great extent.

During the first year of the project approximately forty teachers participated in the training program. Subsequently, these teachers shared the information with other teachers in their respective locations. This was done sometimes in a formal manner, at area teacher meetings, and sometimes on an informal basis, one to one sharing. In the second year a larger number of teachers is being served, which will more than double the number of teachers in the state who are specifically trained to work with learning disabled adults.

D. Budget

Total cost of the project for the first year of implementation was $26,878, as follows:

Category	State Funds	Local Funds
Personnel	9,000	800
Secretarial	1,667	800
Fringe Benefits	2,300	
Other Staff	400	200
Staff Travel	800	200
Communications	334	500
Supplies	2,021	109
Participant Support	4,700	
Other Items	350	1,000
Indirect Cost		1,697

During the second year the project is able to operate on a budget of $21,682. Funds are provided by Federal Government monies allocated to the State and distributed under a 309 grant. Upper Iowa University provides additional funds in

its role of project sponsor. Other 309 project budgets are similar to this.

E. Contribution to the Improvement of Teacher Education

This staff development project was designed to increase teacher competency in the education of handicapped students by helping the teacher become aware of special education techniques and materials through in-service training. The alternative for training these teachers was to send them back to college to take courses in special education. Economically this alternative was impractical, and many teachers could not attend college due to family and other job responsibilities. Also, the college classes were generally not geared toward the adult exceptional student.

Since teachers were already at work in their classes with handicapped adults, there was some urgency in disseminating information and giving them some initial training. The workshop format was set up and training began within three months after the project contract was signed. Participants in the initial program felt it did indeed meet their needs, as reflected in the following quotations:

> "Of all workshops I've attended this one has been geared specifically to problems we encounter."
>
> "I feel that I have learned so much about how to help my students."
>
> "One of the big things it did for me personally ...was to give me more confidence in my relationship with the clients."

Area Coordinators of Adult Basic Education made comments such as:

> "The teachers who attended were all very positive in their comments. They are anxious to share their new ideas with the other teachers."

> "My instructors were delighted with their workshops through your 309. They came back with many new ideas which they spent an evening sharing with their fellow teachers."

Administrators of the facilities housing these schools for handicapped adults were asked to evaluate their teachers who completed the learning disability training project. Their comments included:

> "Our facility was pleased at the results produced not only by the teacher herself but the students also. The class sparked up and all students became interested in the class each day and did not wish to miss it."

> "Our teacher has shown tremendous growth in working with the residents of this county care facility."

> "Participation in our classes has been excellent. We have residents who have progressed far beyond our expectations."

As word of this project spreads, further interest has been indicated by invitations to speak at the Plains Regional Conference of the International Reading Association, Iowa Association for Lifelong Learning, and the National ABE Commission meeting.

F. Evaluation Methods and Results

As each workshop was completed, it was evaluated by participants within the framework of the stated goals. The question was asked, "Were the teachers more confident and competent to teach learning disabled adults?" The intended learning outcomes were the various items presented during the workshop. The responses of the teachers, both their understanding of the item and their use of it in their classroom, were the actual learning outcomes.

All of the teachers put to use some of the ideas they received through the workshops. When asked to name the two

most valuable aspects of each session, all participants listed two, and most participants listed several additional aspects. They were able to name several specific students for whom the workshop ideas would be appropriate and they were anxious to return to the classroom and put the techniques to work. Teachers recorded positive reactions by their students and new excitement and stimulation in their classrooms.

Administrative personnel aware of the project also recorded positive reactions as quoted in Section E above.

This project could be best replicated on a small group basis with a series of workshop sessions. This allows for individual consultation regarding specific pupils and classroom situations, and it allows time for teachers to absorb smaller amounts of information and putting techniques into actual use before being overwhelmed with additional information. The presenter must have a background in special education to provide adequate explanations and answer participant questions.

This project was initially aimed at students in institutional settings, but was expanded for all teachers working with Level I Basic Skills. Also, many of the approaches have been shown to work with more advanced students, so the training has far-reaching implications.